

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 7-9 and 11 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 7 is amended and claims 5, 6, 10 and 12-14 are canceled. Support for the amendments to claim 7 may be found, for example, in original claim 10. No new matter is added. In view of the foregoing amendment and following remarks, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested. Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-4 are allowed.

I. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Office Action rejects claims 7-9 and 11¹ under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as having been obvious over JP 07-081932 to Matsukura ("Matsukura"); rejects claims 5, 6 and 12-14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as having been obvious over Matsukura in view of WO 00-73211 to Matsuzawa et al. ("Matsuzawa"), or alternatively as having been obvious over Matsuzawa; and rejects claims 9 and 10² under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as having been obvious to Matsukura in view of Matsuzawa. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claims 5, 6, 10 and 12-14 are canceled, thereby rendering their rejections moot. As to the remaining claims, independent claim 7 is amended, thereby rendering the rejections against independent claim 7 and the claims dependent therefrom moot.

¹ The Office Action, on page 2, indicates that, "Claims 7-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over JP07-081932." However, the Examiner clarified in a brief telephone conference with the Applicants' representative on March 12, 2008, that a typographical error was made, and that the Office Action should have indicated that claim 11 was also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as having been obvious over JP 07-081932.

² The Office Action, on page 4, indicates that, "Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over JP07-081932 to Matsukura, in view of WO00/73211 to Matsuzawa et al." However, the Examiner clarified in a brief telephone conference with the Applicants' representative on March 12, 2008, that a typographical error was made, and that the Office Action should have indicated that claim 10 was also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as having been obvious over Matsukura in view of Matsuzawa.

Specifically, amended claim 7 requires, in part, "the humidified gas is supplied starting at a temperature of 100°C or above, and is continuously supplied until a temperature of 200°C to 350°C is reached." However, none of the cited references suggest or teach at least this limitation.

At most, Matsukura teaches supplying a humidified gas at a *constant* temperature in a temperature range of 60°C to 100°C. See Abstract. However, Matsukura does not suggest or teach supplying a humidified gas starting at a temperature of 100°C or above *and* continuously supplying the humidified gas until a temperature of 200°C to 350°C is reached.

Matsukura generally describes calcining the cerium carbonate at 300°C to 650°C. However, this calcining step is distinct from the supplying a humidified gas step. Generally, Matsukura teaches adding oxycylic acid or ammonium bicarbonate to a nitrate or hydrochloride solution of cerium. In an example, a carbonic acid cerium undergoes a humidification heat treatment at a *constant* temperature of 60°C to 100°C. Then the resulting carbonate acid oxide is calcined at a temperature of between 300°C to 550°C, thereby producing a cerium oxide. See paragraphs [0005] to [0007]. Therefore, Matsukura does not teach or suggest supplying a humidified gas at *100°C or above and continuously supplying the gas* until a temperature of 200°C to 350°C is reached.

Moreover, Matsuzawa does not cure this deficiency. Column 3, lines 36-39 of Matsuzawa describes "that a predetermined flow rate of oxygen gas or the like is blown into the kiln duct and the heating of the hydrate is carried in an oxidizing atmosphere." However, Matsuzawa does not suggest or teach supplying a *humidified* gas. The Office Action on page 5 relies on Matsuzawa for this teaching and alleges that "it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention by Applicants to supply the humidified gas until the temperature of 200°C to 350°C as Applicants set forth in claim 10, motivated by the fact that Matsuzawa et al. ... disclose that raising temperature from heating

to calcinations while supplying oxygen gas." However, one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate that "humidified gas" is distinct from "gas." Accordingly, Matsuzawa fails to teach or suggest at least the limitation of providing a humidified gas. Moreover, Matsuzawa also fails to teach or suggest supplying a humidified gas starting at a temperature of 100°C or above and continuously supplying it until a temperature of 200°C to 350°C is reached.

Accordingly, the teachings of Matsukura and Matsuzawa, alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest at least these limitations. Therefore, neither Matsukura or Matsuzawa, alone or in combination, would have rendered obvious independent claim 7 and claims 8, 9 and 11, which depend therefrom. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of this application are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:

Petition for Extension of Time

Date: March 17, 2008

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